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A DISPENSATION FROM THE *GREAT* ARCH-BISHOP of the TRUE CHURCH-CATHOLICK;

FOR

PRIESTS, and all others that are in holy Orders, that have not the gift of Continency, but are subject so to looke on women as to lust after them, which is heart Adultery: That if they so please, may lawfully marry, though they have vowed chastity.

Sent forth out of tender compassion to their poore souls, such especially (if there be such amongst them) that are of noble and Heroick spirits, and scorne to be enslaved to the Popes decrees, not grounded on Scripture to their own destruction both of souls and bodies.

Written by ELLIS BRADSHAW.

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The words of the *Dispensation* followeth.

BEHOLD, Thus saith the Lord, (though it is true that such who *have power over their own wills, and have decreed in their hearts to keep their Virginity*, and to *make themselves chaste for the kingdome of heavens sake*, finding for the present they *have the gift of continencie*, which none can have, *but they to whom it is given*, see Mat. 19. 10, 11, 12.

In case *they make themselves chaste*, and *remain unmarried*, they do well, and that which is their duty, and the best for them; see 1 Cor. 7. 37, 38, 39. 40. see also, vers. 28. & 32. 35, 36.

Yet to the residue who have not *power over their own wills*, but their minds are unchaste; Thus saith the Lord) *Increase and multiply, and repleniſh the earth, and ſubdue it*, Gen. 1. 28 and Chap. 9. 1. *If they cannot containe, let them marry, for it is better for to marry then to burn*; 1 Cor. 7. 9 *To avoid fornication, let every man have his wife, and let every woman have her owne husband*, 1 Cor. 7. 1, 2. *Marriage is honourable amongſt all men, & the bed undefiled, but whoremengers and adulterers God will Judge*; see Heb. 13. 4.

But if marriage be honourable amongſt all men, and that Priests be men; Then marriage is honourable also amongst Priests; and they ought not to be restrained, nor forbid to marry: nor ought they to bind themselves from it, nor is it unholy, nor dishonourable, neither in them nor in the holiest men; *Adam* in his innocency was bid to increase and multiply, and the holier men are, and so much the more likely they are to increase and multiply an holy and honourable generation: and so on the contrary, see Deut. 23. 2, 3. 6, 7, 8 and Exod. 20. 5, 6. & 34. 7. & Psal. 14. 5. & 22. 30. & 78. 8. Psal. 112. 2. & Mat. 3. 7. & 12. 30.

But they cannot be expected to multiply a *holy generation*, unlesse they have wives, for children begotten in adultery, are not ordinarily accounted holy, nor in fornication, though by regeneration they may be made holy. And therefore it is said, if they *cannot containe, let them marry* And *to avoid fornication, let every man have his wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*

But if every man, then why not Priests? for Priests are men, if they cannot containe, and that *as well as Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, and*

and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas, who were all holy men, Provided it be two Sisters, see 1 Cor. 8. 5. As it had been lawfull also for *Paul* and *Barnabas* had they not had the gift of continencie, for then they had been called of God to marry, and bound to it by necessity, and that not only to avoid fornication, but to multiply and encrease a godly seed, for repleniſhment of the earth, & see Matth. 2. 15. And it is not of God but the Devills pollicies, and doctrins to perswade holy men not to marry, and what in him lyeth, he will hinder it least such should be multiplyed as are against his Kingdom; therefore all such authority as doth, or would hinder it, belongeth to his Kingdome, and it is he that governs in such men, as usurpe such authority without Scriptureground, for there is no Scripture that forbiddeth to marry, if either called or necessitated to it.

They might as well blame *Peter* and the rest of the Apostles, and exclude them out of the number of holy men, and out of the number of those in holy orders, as to exclude Priests, because they cannot containe, but are ingaged to marry; Considering *it is better to marry then to burne*, or to lust, *For the Law hath said, thou shalt not lust*, But never said, thou shalt not marry, see Rom. 7. 7.

And whereas the Priests object, That they must not marry, for they have vowed chastity, and were so ingaged, by the Lawes of the Church, before they could be admitted into holy orders; and also must be degraded againe, if they should so break their vow, as to marry, though never so great necessity should require it, the vow being made unto God, it must not be retracted, nor revoked.

Answ. It is in effect answered already, for *who required this* vow *at your hands?*

And this is not the true Church-Catholick that imposed on you this obligation, but quite contradictory to the mind and will of the *Arch-Sheapheard, and Bishop of all our souls*, who never required any such vows at your hands, and he biddeth his true Church-Catholick to *do all that he commandeth, and neither adde thereto, nor detract therefrom*, see Deut. 4. 2. & Chap. 12. 32. And therefore such vowes are absolutely unlawfull, because never commanded, nor approved of by him, and therefore they are to be Ranked amongst such vowes as are made by a maid or a wife, which *her father disalloweth*, or *her husband disalloweth*, which are made voide, and shall not stand by reason of such disallowance, *and the Lord will forgive them, and not require them at their hands*, see Numb. 30. 5. 8. 13. 15.

But if a father or an husband may make a vow voide by his disallowance of it, How much more will *the father of spirits* make such vowes void, and of none effect, and not require them of us, which he never did either require at our hands, nor incourage us to make, but hath wholly disallowed to make any vows, to do any thing contrary to his expresse command, Now his command is expresst to *encrease and multiply*, and that to thee in particular, if thou art not sure that thou hast *the gift of continency*, and *power over thine own will*, rather *then burne*, as hath been proved.

And thou peremptorily vowest thou wilt not obey him but do quite the contrary: and therefore this is not a matter to make vows binding in, for it is not lawfull to make such a vow, in regard no man knoweth that he can keep it, nor but that he is, or may ere long be called of God to marry, & shall a man bind himself out from obeying his call to the holy estate of matrimony, where God hath required no such thing. There was once *above forty men that bound themselves with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink, till they had killed Paul*, and yet they were prevented and did not kill him, now had it not been selfe murther in them to have kept their oath, and neither to have eat nor drunke but starved themselves, and destroyed their souls to boot, see Acts 22. 12. 13.

Now the case is manifestly the same with such who have rashly and presumptuously vowed chastity, in case they cannot contain but burn with unchaste desires, And is it not selfe destruction both of soul and body, to continue in that mind, were it not far better for such to *marry*, then so to *burne*: Their vow being manifestly a presumptuous sin, as so they now find, because they cannot keep it, but live in heart adultery, or fornication, and so already in the breach of their vow of chastity, in the sight of God and of their own consciences which is worser and a greater sin then the breach of their vow by taking a wife: Nay for ought they know, their burning in desire is a call of God to take a wife; And if so, *Whether it were better for them to obey God or man*, let themselves be Judges.

And where do they reade in all the Scriptures either of such command or such a practice? Do we read of any in Scripture either men or women, that bound themselves to chastity by vows? Nay, doe we read of any in Scripture, either holy or prophane, that did it, but such who are of the Church of *Rome*? & at the first decreeing of it, it was grievous to the whole Church, and only done out of meer humane pollicy, lest the wives and children of men in holy orders, should be

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the more chargeable to the Church, then in case they were single, as is evident in the *Ecclesiasticall* Historyes, which was an horrible and most notoriously wicked and unmerciſull decree, both for their ſouls and bodies, and a manifeſt Uſurpation of power & authority over the conſciences of men, yea over Chriſt himſelf, and againſt his Kingdom, and his expreſſe commands and precepts, as hath been ſhewed.

But if it be objected, that we ought to *obey the Church the pillar and ground of truth, and to obey them that have the rule over us, and are over us in the Lord, and admoniſh us, for they watch for our ſoules.*

Anſw. It is true, if they be over us in the Lord, and watch for our ſouls indeed, and be of the Church indeed, of which Chriſt is the Head, and be ſubſervient unto him, *and hold to the Head*, commanding nothing but what he requires, and enjoyneth them to *command and teach*; but the head of the true Catholick-Church never made ſuch Lawes, nor bound ſuch *heavy burthens* to *lay on mens ſhoulders*; ſee Luke 11. 46. nor whereby to oblige either Prieſts or people, no neither men nor women, that they ſhould not marry, and encreaſe and multiply, and repleniſh the earth as well as others, yea as *well as Peter, and the reſt of the Apoſtles*, &c. in caſe *they have not the gift of continency*, for in caſe they have, they had better not marry; as hath been ſaid before: But it was a ſort of men of whom the Apoſtle *Paul* hath long ſince foretold us of: *(to wit.) That in the latter times ſome ſhall depart from the faith, giving heed unto lying ſpirits, & doctrines of Devills, ſpeaking lyes through hypocriſie, having their conſciences ſeared as with an hot Iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtaine from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them that believe and know the truth*: And thus ſaith the Apoſtle, the *Spirit ſpake expreſſely*, in thoſe dayes which hath now long ſince been verified by the decrees, and inhibitions, and commands of the Church of *Rome* in expreſſe words; ſee 1 Tim. 4. 1, 2, 3. No man can deny but theſe are the latter times of which the Spirit ſpake; nor that theſe are the men departed from the faith, who are found acting according as the Spirit then ſpake, branding them out as with a ſign in their foreheads, that ſo the true Church Catholick might know them by ſight, when they appeared in the world; and that from all other people under the whole heaven, leſt they ſhould be deceived ſo as to periſh with them, and be *partakers of their ſins*, and ſo *of their plagues*.

And above all other markes of the Antichriſtian Church, there are none more viſible, and legible, and in plainer charracters, nor more indelible, for ſo long a time of continuation, then theſe two of *forbid-*

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ding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, &c. For this I dare boldly assert, that there is no people or nation in all the world that professeth the Christian-Faith, that forbid marriage to any sort of people, unlesse to their slaves and vassells, but only the Church of *Rome*, and those that follow their faith, and indeed are slaves to them, and so are of their Church, considered as under the same Head; (*to wit*) the Pope: Nor can this very brand whereby the Spirit of God hath so expressely stigmatized and marked them out to us, by all their learning and cunning sleights, and crooked evasions, be scratched out, or so much as covered; but it remaineth still indellibly visible to all the reformed Churches; who thereby certainly know as by a visible badge, and cleare character that they are the men that are departed *from the faith*: That is to say, *from the faith* of the true Church-Catholick, and that *give heed unto lying spirits, and doctrines of Devills, speaking lyes through hypocrisie, having their consciences seared as with an hot Iron*, &c. 1 Tim 4. 1, 2, 3. And doubtlesse were not their consciences *seared* they would confesse it; And did they not give more *heed unto lying spirits, and doctrines of Devills*, then to the Spirit of truth and to his doctrines, they would certainly repent and be greatly ashamed, either to accord with, or practice in the least correspondent thereunto: And when they maintain such doctrins, they cannot chuse but falsifie and *speak lyes through hypocrisie*; for their own consciences though never so seared, if they be but rationall men, and believe, these Scriptures will witnesse against them to their very faces; and that these are no better then meer *doctrines of Devills*, and that the Church of *Rome* and their government is properly called *that man of sin* which *should be revealed* before the coming of *that day of Christ*. The Church of *Rome* (I say) and the government thereof, considered as under their Head, the Pope, is that man of sin, see 2 Thess. 2. Ch. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

For first, as it hath been proved, these are the men departed *from the faith* and the Apostle plainly asserteth, that *that day of Christ should not come, except their come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition*; vers. 3. From which it is cleare that this *falling away* is meant of *a falling away*, or departing *from the faith*, meaning the true faith.

2. And the Apostle further describes this son of perdition (to wit) *Who oppoſeth or exalteth himselfe above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himselfe that he is God*; see vers. 4. Now is it not evident in that which hath

hath been ſhewed, that he both *oppoſeth and exalteth himſelf above all that is called God, or that is worſhipped*, when he forbiddeth *to marry*, where God hath bid marry, and when he *commandeth to abſtain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them that believe and know the truth.*

Is not this firſt in direct oppoſition againſt God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt?

And ſecondly, Doth he not herein exalt himſelfe above them, which indeed are all that can properly be called God? Though yet he likewiſe exalteth himſelf above all Magiſtrates, which in ſome reſpects are likewiſe in Scripture *called Gods*, though *they muſt dye like men.*

And thirdly, Doth he not *ſit in the Temple of God* (that is to ſay) *in the Church of God*; for there was once a true Church of God at *Rome*, till *the myſtery of Iniquity* was got above it, and wrought out the true Chriſtian government, and uſurped all Church power over the true Chriſtians, & tyrannized over them, and made binding lawes for them, which Chriſt never made, nor allowed of; and yet to this day, they uſurp the title of the Chriſtian Catholick-Church, of which they own the Pope as Head, and honour him as God, yea and above God, owning him as Judge of doctrines and that above the Scriptures; and ſo by conſequence above God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and his holy Spirit, by whom they were given forth; And what is this leſſe then honouring him as God, yea and above God; which is flat and groſſe Idolatry, and yet this alſo he aſcribeth to *himſelf*, which is as much as *ſhewing himſelf that he is God*, and would go near to excommunicate, and alſo ſeek the ruine and deſtruction of any King, or Kingdom, or Nation whatſoever, that doth but give liberty to Prieſts and men in holy orders to argue the contrary in any publick way; though notwithſtanding it is argued in a private way, and cleared convincingly to be a groſſe Idolatrous and proud uſurpation and odiouſly abominable both before God and men, of which all that are ingenuous of that religion, that have conſidered the premiſes, cannot chooſe but be aſhamed to profeſſe themſelves acceſſary to ſuch groſſe Idolatry.

And the rather conſidering this uſurpation was ſo long ſince foretold by the Spirit of God in ſacred Scripture, and the means & cauſe of it ſo manifeſtly held forth to be ſo wicked an author, for the Apoſtle deſcribes him to be *him whoſe coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and ſignes, and lying wonders*; verſ. 9. *And with all deceivableneſſe of unrighteouſneſſe in them that periſh, becauſe they received not the love of the truth that they might be ſaved*, Verſ. 10.

And besides considering the end and reason why God in justice hath suffered the Devill and his instruments to grow up to such hight of authority and power, by usurpation and deceivable stratagems and devices, and continued them so long a time, to wit, *And for this cause shall God send them strong delusions, that they should beleeve a lye*, ver. 11 *That they all might be damned, who beleeved not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousnes*, see vers. 12. Doubtlesse it is a sad and fearfull condition that those men are fallen into, to whom God purposely sendeth such *strong delusions that they might be damned*, and when he *blindeth their eyes and hardeneth their hearts, lest they should believe and be converted, and Christ should heale them.* This was so with the Jewes and is now so with the church of *Rome*; now what hath befallen to the Jewes in judgment they well know, and the like and worse judgment shall certainly befall them, so many of them as doe not repent, and the time is at hand.

But I shall only commend unto them one portion of Scripture, and so conclude, because I would not exceede a sheet in print upon this subject. And that is *John* 12. beginning at the 37 & 44 verse.

It was said of the Jewes; That *though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they beleeved not on him*, vers. 37 And the reason is rendred vers. 39. to be *Therefore because Esaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them*, vers. 40. And this was *that the saying of the Prophet Isaias might be fulfilled, that they remained* so obstinate, and *did not beleeve.*

Now there is many propheſies concerning the church of *Rome* which must certainly be fullfilled in their season. *And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightnesse of his coming*, 2 Thess. 2. 8.

Now this consumption is allready begun, and this destruction shall certainly follow, and is even at their dores. And therefore if there be any of the people of God amongst them, hear the exhortation of the Holy Ghost.

Come out from amongst them my people, and be not partakers of their sins, that ye receive not of their plagues. Revel. 18. 4.

And to such who are not seared and sealed allready to destruction, and voyd of all fear of God, see *Rev.* 14. 9, 10, 11.

FINIS.